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ABSTRACT

A descriptive study examined whether reading aloud to children regularly beginning at infancy would have an effect on their future disposition to reading. Subjects, 487 kindergarten through third grade students in Basking Ridge, New Jersey, were given a questionnaire to be completed by the parents. Ninety-seven questionnaires representing 116 children were returned for a response rate of 21.66%. Results indicated that a strong background of being read aloud to beginning during infancy had several positive effects: (1) strong positive attitudes towards books; (2) a larger scope of reading materials; and (3) the introduction of more involved reading material at earlier ages than their peers. (Nine tables of data are included; 23 references, the questionnaire, and the letter accompanying the questionnaire are attached.) (Author/RS)

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THE EFFECTS OF READING ALOUD ON A CHILD'S DISPOSITION TO READING

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine if reading aloud to children regularly beginning at infancy would have an effect on their future disposition to reading. A questionnaire was sent home with 167 kindergarten through third grade students. They were returned on a voluntary basis with a response rate of 21.66 percent.

The results of the study showed that a strong background of being read to aloud beginning during infancy has several positive effects. Among them are stronger more positive attitudes towards books, a larger scope of reading materials, and the introduction of more involved reading matter at earlier ages than their peers.

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Upon being questioned about what he was reading to a baby, Tom Selleck replied,"It is not what you read, but the tone of your voice that is important (Three Men and a Baby)."Cushla's parents read to her because they didn't know what else to do with their extremely ill child (Butler, 1979). Jim Trelease read aloud to his children because his parents had read to him as a child (1985). In To Kill A Mockingbird Scout could not remember learning to read. "Reading was something that just came to me.....I could not remember when the lines above Atticus's moving finger separated into words, but I had stared at them all the evenings in my memory, listening to the news of the day...anything Atticus happened to be reading when I crawled into his lap every night (Lee,1960, p. 24)." First Lady, Barbara Bush has made reading her personal crusade, stressing "the important role parents play in inspiring the love of reading in their children (Klein, 1989). In both fiction and reality a high value is placed on reading aloud and its positive effect on the child.

There is a great concern in today's world that we are becoming an alliterate population. From classrooms where professors like Dr. James Cook (Kean, 1988) expound on their concerns over adult alliteracy, to books devoted to developing readers, "The big question in this country is not whether children can read, but whether they will read (Copperman, 1986)". At the same time, there appears to be a growing movement to read to infants. One need only visit a bookstore to see the evidence; there are books on how to read to babies, books on what to read to any age child, and in the last ten years there has been an enormous increase in the number of children's books published annually. The move to teach young children to read, which was prevalent in the 1970's (Resnick, et al, 1987) appears to have evolved into a less demanding, but perhaps more positive approach.

The question here is, will this movement of reading to children and

infants have any long term effects on the future adult reading population? Can the world look forward to an alliterate population ten, fifteen, twenty years from now?

It should be clarified at this point, that the concern here is developing a disposition to reading by reading aloud to children, beginning at infancy. The teaching of reading will come more easily to most children if they have had a strong background of being read aloud to.

Jim Trelease (1985), Paul Copperman (1986), and the educators they cite firmly believe that remedial reading classes would not have a reason to exist if parents read aloud and instilled the love of reading in their children at an early age. Reading makes a big impression when it occurs during the early years of child's life, the time when imitation is the primary learning force. Parents, grandparents, and siblings are all heroes and role models. "If the child sees these heroes reading and involved with books, experience shows us that it is very likely that he will wish to do the same (Trelease,1985, p. 17)."

Reading aloud seems to have some effect on children. The immediate reactions are easy to see and evaluate, while the long term effects are more subtle and harder to isolate. Children who are read to from infancy may develop receptive and expressive communication skills earlier than infants who do not hear the printed word. Their early interest in books and reading may be instrumental in developing a lifetime disposition to reading. Trelease read to his children as if by instinct. He was "passing the torch" given to him as a child by his parents (NJRA convention, 1989). This disposition to reading may be found in children of varying intelligences who have been read to from infancy through the preschool years.

Educators need to be aware of the reading background children bring

to school. Programs may need to be adjusted or changed for the children who come to school with prior knowledge of reading and books. These children may have a broader language or vocabulary base, more experiential background (received vicariously through books), a greater story awareness, and a longer attention span. Their motivation to read may even overcome reading problems in some cases. Cushla taught herself to read at the age of four despite the dismal outlook of retardation previously predicted by her doctors. She accomplished this because her parents had read her up to fifteen books a day from the first time Cushla came home from the hospital as an infant (Butler, 1975). While a teacher may need to work on vocabulary development and story concept with the less read to children, those with a reading background may need to be moved into independent reading experiences quickly to prevent boredom and to take advantage of the already established disposition to reading.

Educators and researchers support the practice of reading aloud to infants and young children, though few studies go beyond early reading experiences. Dorothy Butler believes that reading begins at home, but it is not taught with words and symbols. It comes through the variety of reading experiences a child receives at home from birth on. She believes that if children learn to listen expertly that then they are only a small step from becoming readers (Butler, 1982). Carl Smith (1988) believes that the model of parents reading "was even more influential than was reading aloud to children." Amy Wahl also stresses a reading environment beginning at birth. She states that it is most important to foster "an interest in and a love for reading (Wahl, 1988)."

If reading to infants and young children has long term benefits, than the attitudes of the general public should also be effected. This cannot be done through educational journals, nor by teachers communicating with parents; as neither method reaches the parents of

infants. Educating pediatricians would be a logical beginning. As Jim Trelease pointed out in a speech at the NJRR convention (April, 1989), first time parents look at their pediatricians as gods, taking their advice with almost blind faith. Education, however, must go beyond the pediatricians into the clinics, the day-care centers, and anywhere young mothers frequent.

HYPOTHESIS

The practice of reading aloud to children on a regular basis, beginning at infancy, will have no significant effect on the development of communication skills as they relate directly to reading, that is, on their language development (onset, rate, and complexity) and their disposition to reading (onset of reading, and continued interest in).

DEFINITIONS

Disposition to reading - the development of a positive attitude towards reading, which manifests itself in a habit of reading regularly.

Infancy - birth to one year

Literacy play - the act of using reading and writing activities in play; i.e. making pretend lists, reading to dolls, playing school.

PROCEDURES

This study falls primarily into the category of descriptive research. A questionnaire was distributed to 487 children in kindergarten through third grade in the Basking Ridge, New Jersey school system. Ninety-seven questionnaires were returned on a voluntary basis, representing 116 children in the two elementary schools and giving a response of 21.66 percent. Parents were encouraged to include all their children in their responses which gave a total of 233 children ranging from infants to grown children twenty-four years of age.

The questionnaire was approved by the Superintendent of Schools previous to its distribution. At the request of the school system, the

responses were anonymous, although parents were free to add their names if they so desired. A copy of the cover letter and questionnaire are found in Appendix A.

RESULTS

The educational level of both the mothers and the fathers range from one high school dropout to five Phd's in a sample of 194 parents. Table I shows the educational background of the mothers and fathers

Table I

Educational Background

	Mothers	Fathers
High School Dropout	0	1
High School	7	5
High School +	13	9
College	46	37
College +	8	3
Masters	19	33
Masters +	4	4
Phd	0	5

listed separately.

The breakdown of working parents is shown in Table II. The one

Table II

Working Parents

	Mothers	Fathers
Full-time	15	90
Part-time	37	2
No Work	45	1

father who is at home full-time, is specifically labeled "housefather".

in this family the mother works full-time.

Only four of the respondents were single parent families. The other ninety-three households were two parent familes.

Reading aloud to children is a shared responsibility in most families. Table III details who does the the reading aloud. Some

Table III

Readers

Mothers	Fathers	Other Adult	Siblings
97	62	4	12

responcents added readers beyond the parents, these have been included in the results because they were counted as regular readers.

As can be seen in Table IV the frequency of reading aloud

Table IV

Frequency of Reading

Daily	3-4 x Week	2 x Week	Weekly	2 x Month
58	20	8	7	4

experiences range from a high of multiple times a day to a low of two times a month.

Table V represents the times of day children are read to on a

Table V

Reading Time

Anytime	Afternoon	Evening	Bedtime
19	10	16	36

regular basis. Forty-two percent of those who read to their children daily also state that they normally read more than once a day. The multiple readings occur at various times and for numerous purposes. In

these cases reading is used as a means of calming a child, filling time in the car or doctors' offices or just as a special time for being together.

The age parents began reading to their children is represented in Table VI. The types of materials parents read to their children varies

Table VI

Age Reading Aloud Began

Birth-6m.	6m.-1 Year	by 2 Years	by 3 Years	by 4 Years
37	35	20	3	2

considerably depending upon the age of the child when reading aloud was initiated. Thirty-six percent began reading to their children between birth and six months old. In fifty percent of these cases the parents reported reading everything to their child including; cereal boxes, junk mail, newspapers, magazines, the Bible, textbooks, their own novels, and finally children's books. In all of the cases where the parents read a wide variety of materials to their children, they began reading within a few days or weeks of birth. Additionally many of the same parents report that they were reading chapter books to their children by four and five years old. As parents began reading to children at an older age, the scope of material narrowed. If reading aloud did not start before the age of two, the parents tended to read only age appropriate or recommended books for children.

Not all parents could respond to all of the questions. The following tables are based on the reponses of the parents who did remember. Infants showed their interest in being read aloud to numerous ways from smiling, laughing, and cooing to a variety of types of physical responses like kicking and reaching. The ages children began to exhibit an interest in books is represented in Table VII. One fact that showed

Table VII

Interest in Looking at Books

Reading Began at	Birth -6m.	1 Year	18 Months	2 Years +
6 Months	17			
9 Months	10			
1 Year	14	17		
18 Months	2	5	10	
2 Years	6	10	1	9
2 1/2 Years				2
3 Years		1		3
4 Years				4

up in the tabulations was the reactions of the children who were introduced to books around the age of eighteen months. These children seemed to show a positive interest in books almost immediately, while forty-five percent of the children who were introduced to books at the age of two or later took six months to a year to show an interest.

Table VIII indicates when children began recognizing words. None

Table VIII

Recognizes Words

Began Reading to	Birth to 6m.	1 Year	18 Months	2 Years +
2 1/2 years	8	3		
3 Years	11	8	2	2
4 Years	11	8	2	6
5 Years	13	8	4	7
6 Years	3	1	2	2
7 Years	2	1		

of the children introduced to books after eighteen months of age showed

any recognition or involvement in memorizing or retelling the stories read to them before the age of three. Table IX provides information on

Table IX

Begins Memorizing

Began Reading to	Birth - 6m.	1 Year	18 Months	2 Years
18m. - 2 Years	7	2		
2 1/2 Years	16	8		
3 Years	15	14	4	1
4 Years	4	2	4	7
5 Years	4	3	1	5
6 Years	1	1		1

when children began to retell or memorize stories.

By breaking present reading habits into two groups it is possible to see some general trends. Only eight percent who were read to regularly beginning under a year old needed encouragement to read on their own. Once started, the eight percent all enjoyed the activity. Forty percent of those who were read to initially after the age of two needed encouragement to read. This group contained less avid readers, who were less interested in school, and tended to have a narrower selection in their choice of books.

The young readers under the age of eight often preferred being read to until they developed a high level of self-confidence. Some older readers who had been slow in learning to read, although capable of reading on their own, still enjoyed listening to a story. Several parents indicated that this is one way they encouraged reading. After beginning a book aloud, the child continued the book on his own. This seems to work well when the book is one of interest to the child.

In the group of children introduced to books under a year old, there

were several who had a slow start learning to read. As a whole this group was slower to develop confidence and enjoyed being read to. All, however, eventually overcame their slow start, developed confidence, and enjoy reading now, even though some of them remain slow but steady readers.

In all but four of the families, the parents served as daily reading role models for their children. Parents were never seen reading by their children in only two homes. One of these two homes states that their child only reads when required to for school.

CONCLUSIONS

Several generalizations can be drawn from the data collected. The age parents begin reading to their children can effect their reading habits and attitudes. Children introduced to books within eighteen months after birth seem to have an overall stronger attitude towards books than those who are introduced after two years of age. The almost immediate acceptance of books at the age of eighteen months, word recognition beginning as early as two years, and retelling stories beginning at eighteen months with the large majority involved by three years old seems to support the practice of reading aloud to infants. Additionally, children read to before eighteen months of age, learn to read despite difficulties in some cases and continue to read without needing much encouragement as they grow. These children also read a wider variety of subject matter, adjusting easily to material and length.

The family profile must also be considered in viewing children's reading dispositions. Family attitudes towards reading form a role model for children who naturally imitate what they see around them. The effect of the example set by the parents and older siblings reading too, cannot be ignored. This may be what initiates the pretend reading, reading to dolls or other inanimate objects, and memorizing stories. These are

widely reported activities of children who were read to at an early age. Reading then becomes a part of their everyday pattern of life.

Questions were not directly asked about family television viewing habits although some respondents volunteered information. Of these, the majority were book oriented families and it appeared television was not a problem. These families tended to control the viewing of television and did not allow the television to control them. Families that had to encourage reading were often the ones who reported television had a strong influence on their children. Several such families were taking steps to curtail the viewing of television from turning it off all week, to limiting the hours it could be turned on, to scheduling read aloud times in place of television. One family with six children reported spending five years with no T.V. and averaging forty library books a week. The grown children in this family are still avid readers.

The way a parent speaks to their child conversationally may also be effected by reading aloud. Vocabulary and sentence length of well read to children, as well as the complexity of their thoughts are all aspects of language that are influenced by reading. Purcell-Gates (1987) refers to "book language" in her study. The image of three year old Michael sitting on his mother's lap in the doctor's office adds credence to the growth of complex language and thoughts through books. Michael sat totally absorbed in a science book written for eight to ten year olds. His mother read and talked while he responded with thoughtful answers and questions of his own. What stood out was the references Michael pulled from past readings and experiences. Michael, his mother said, had been read to from birth, and now she found herself going to harder, more detailed books to keep the appetite of his questioning mind satisfied. The parents who began reading chapter books at age four or five were responding to the same book appetite as Michael exhibited. These

children have developed their language beyond the everyday speech of their peers. This increased language and vocabulary development have led the well read to children naturally to longer more complex books. They have also developed longer attention spans and story memory which allows them to extend their interest over numerous reading sessions.

The results, as presented here, disprove the hypothesis that reading aloud to children beginning at infancy has little effect. Reading aloud to children before the age of eighteen months would appear to have a profound effect on their attitudes towards reading and the way they approach reading for the period covered here. This is not to say that there are no other factors which effect a child's reading disposition. There are, this is only one of many. It may even be correct to say that reading aloud from infancy develops a habit that is hard to break. As one anonymous fifteen year old said, "My mother read to me before I was born and every day after that I heard that voice. Now, if I don't read something just for me every day, I feel that I am missing something."

IMPLICATIONS

There are many attitudes in the area of reading that are formed before a child enters school. Reading disposition, ease of success, and habits are all effected by the age a child is introduced to books. To foster positive reading attitudes educators need to find ways to reach into the community and encourage reading to the very young before they enter school.

If positive affective attitudes are to be formed early, sources beyond the school must be reached. Obstetricians and pediatricians, once educated, can be an invaluable resource, for new mothers look to their doctors for much advice with their first child. Clinics and maternity wards can reach mothers not covered by a doctor. Prenatal classes and young mothers' groups can also disseminate information.

Advice to families is not enough. Many children from all economic backgrounds spend their young lives in day care facilities. It is these secondary caretakers who need to be educated and learn how to read to young children. By doing so they can provide a positive atmosphere for early book learning to take place in.

As educators, teachers should encourage these early reading experiences. The children they teach are effected by them, as are their attitudes towards books and in the larger picture, school. The classroom will change if more students with early reading experiences arrive, this could be the way reverse the downward trend of reading interest in the fourth grade and above. Having early reading experiences does not mean the child has been taught to read. Through interest and exposure the child may have begun to recognize words and be ready for learning all the skills involved in reading. When the motivation and background are there the teacher should be free to act on it.

This study was done in an affluent community. The results should be compared with similar studies done in different types of communities to realize the full scope of the effects of reading or not reading to the very young. Reading interest and success is determined by many factors of which reading aloud is only one. That does not diminish the importance of early reading experiences. The child who is introduced to reading and the sound of the reading voice at an early age has the chance to develop a strong reading disposition before actually learning to read.

Reading aloud cannot be separated from other early language activities or given absolute credit for creating children with a disposition towards reading, but early reading aloud experiences on a regular basis can certainly be given an important place in the development of the child's future reading performance.

RELATED REASEARCH

Numerous studies have researched the mechanics of reading aloud to children. They have documented the reactions of both the reading adult and the listening child. Pellegrini, Brody, and Sigel(1985) discovered that parents reading to children ages four and five tend to ask low level or literal questions, regardless of the age of the child. Few middle or high level questions were asked. Pellegrini, Brody, and Sigel admit that perhaps the simplicity of the stories they used did not encourage more thoughtful responses. However, parents of communication handicapped children did adjust their level of questioning and vocabulary with their children. Pellegrini, Brody, and Sigel concluded that language competence was more important than age in the adjustments parents made when reading with children.

Children learn a number of important aspects related to reading beginning with their earliest experiences with books. Interaction with the printed page is one of the early ones. It follows the purely listening activities of infancy which have accustomed the child's ear to the tone of reading. This aspect as Trelease (1985) points out is primarily conditioning the child's ear. Teale (1981) sees the mother's reading reactions as primarily unconscious responses. Mothers tend to naturally label, supplying both the question and the answer in the early stages and allowing the child to answer as the reading experiences progress and the child's vocabulary develops. As the child grows the questions will change from labeling, to interpreting pictures, to reading and eliciting questions from the print. This sets up a kind of ongoing dialogue. "The adult expects the child to listen to particular segments of text, to learn from the information contained in the material, and remember the content so it can be conveyed to the adult in the questioning which follows each text segment" (Teale, 1981, p.9).

Teale (1981) points out that not all story book reading events are the same. These differences will effect the reading ability each child brings to school. Teale states that the ways parents read to children may be sociocultural, that is, that working class and middle class parents read differently. This might explain why working class children may have more problems learning to read. "So what we are seeing is that for certain children the interactional pattern of their preschool experience in story book reading events helps socialize them for participating in reading instruction in school" (Teale, 1981, p.10).

In her study of non-reading kindergartners who had been read to at least five times a week for two or more years, Victoria Purcell-Gates (1988) noted specific book knowledge behaviors. Her study centered around the cognitive development of the lexical and syntactic expectations well-read-to children have about the written narrative. "Well- read-to children have an implicit awareness of a particular style of language employed in written stories.....these lexical and syntactic choices serve to increase involvement and imagery" (Purcell-Gates, 1988, p.151). This involvement may be one of the reasons well-read-to children develop a positive attitude towards reading.

Reasoning why reading aloud to young children develops a special feeling towards books and reading Copperman (1982) suggests that it draws on the parent/child bond. This bond is strengthened by the physical contact of sitting in a parent's lap while being read to. Reading is then an expression of love which provides security and through association the feeling carries over to books. Polly Berends (1987) believes that books can provide children with love, emotional security, friendship, and guidance.

The mother/child bond was one of the important aspects of the research Andrea Sledge (1987) undertook which brought a print rich

environment into an area normally not associated with it, the nursery of a correctional institute. She introduced mothers to the concept of reading to their infants on a regular basis and followed their progress until the infants were twelve months old and had to leave the institute. The program proved effective in developing positive attitudes in both the mother and the child toward reading and was a definite step forward in the child's literacy development. Since the program ended at twelve months, long term effects are unknown, however the mothers did take up reading to their older children on visiting days and encouraged the caretakers to read to them outside the institution. The mothers involved also expressed their intent to read to their children once released. In the minds of the mothers, there was a positive long term effect.

Typical of many studies, Sledge being a notable exception, Lamme and Packer (1986) dealt with middle income mothers in their study of book reading behaviors. While Sledge found that book reading soothed most infants almost immediately, Lamme and Packer did not report similar findings. The latter found infants of the same age were often unconnected to the reading experience. It should be noted that Sledge put the mothers through a training program before they began reading aloud to their babies and this could account for the difference in the observations. Lamme and Packer reported four general areas of reading behaviors for children up to fifteen months of age, including; visual, tactile, verbal, and affective. Additionally they discussed the developmental growth stages for each area. Children read to from birth usually became actively involved in the experience by six to nine months of age, with "definite book preferences at six months and definite routines for reading these favorite books. By nine months they predict actions in the book" (Lamme and Packer, 1986, p. 507). When reading familiar books, "one year olds definitely tend to be reading with their

parents more than just listening' (ibid, p. 508). This study did not discuss the child's language/vocabulary development, but just their behavior with books and their verbal indications showing book involvement and understanding.

Reading aloud to infants and young children is a complex act. In a study done by Resnick, et al, children from six months to two years and their mothers were observed and videoed in reading situations. Of the fifty-six behaviors identified in four domains, seven were classified as negative actions. Resnick, et al, found "when a mother shares a book with her infant, the linguistic features of the transaction are imbedded in context of physical, social, and affective interactions' (Resnick, et al, 1987, p. 890).

Dorothy Butler compared the differences in the reading of children who come from a reading environment and retarded readers. Reading, she states, begins at birth and it is not translating "symbol into sound" but "gulping down of print in support of a developing theme, an ongoing series of events or a case for a particular viewpoint; a process that is stimulating and self reinforcing" (Butler, vol. 21, p. 309). Reading begins at home but it is not taught as words and symbols. 'Children who cut their teeth on nursery rhymes, learn to walk with the Gingerbread Man, and go adventuring with Harry, the dirty dog (Zion, 1956) at three and are off with the Jumblies (Lear, 1904) at four are learning to read; in fact, are so near mastery that fussing with the symbol is irrelevant' (ibid, p. 310). She advocates taking this reading environment which fosters readers before children know the printed words and recreating it in the classroom for children who are not readers. She believes that if a child learns to listen expertly that then they can become readers.

In her research, Dolores Durkin (1966) found that neither socioeconomic class or IQ proved to be a reliable indicator in the

prediction of early readers. The IQ's in Durkin's study ranged from 82 to 170. She pointed out that reading early was of greater importance to children with lower IQ's as it gave them longer to establish a reading foundation on which they could build once they entered school. Furthermore Durkin, unlike Teale, found that home factors are more important than socioeconomic ones for children who read early. This means, "the presence of parents who spend time with their children; who read to them; who answer their questions and requests for help; and who demonstrate in their own lives that reading is a rich source of relaxation and contentment" (Durkin, 1966, p. 136) are the important factors in the lives of early readers.

Reading aloud to young children should not be confused with teaching children to read at an early age. Pushing to teach preschoolers to read can be detrimental to their overall development. Patrice Werner and JoAnna Strother (1987) presented case studies of two early readers; Michael who received much pressure to learn to read and Jeff whose mother never tried to teach her child to read. Michael lived in an educationally structured world with high parental expectations. His toys were all educational and he had little contact with other children. Both of Jeff's parents read to him and he went to the library regularly. Jeff had many interests and enjoyed being with other children. Upon entering kindergarten both boys could read, yet they had very different attitudes. Michael "did not appear to value reading except as a means for receiving praise and attention" (Werner and Strother, 1987, p. 541). Jeff, on the other hand, read because he enjoyed it and learned from it, he tended to "expect himself to always do well and to depend on his intellect as a major source of satisfaction" (ibid, p.542). Through encouragement, respect, and a print rich environment, Jeff had come to value reading for itself and for what he could do with it, not what it could do for him.

Durkin (1966) also found that children who read early tend to do so because of their own interest or need and not that of the adult. "Young children are much more responsive to help with reading that is a consequence of their own questions rather than of their parent's ambition or insecurity .....without regard for the child's interest or for the possibility of strain developing in the parent-child relationship" (Durkin, 1966, p.135). These two studies, done twenty years apart, have both reached the same conclusions, there is something within the child that makes an early reader and the adult becomes the facilitator in the child's learning process.

If Dorothy Butler is right than there is something more to reading that deciphering words. Early reading experiences help the child develop skills which will assist the process of learning to read. Copperman (1982), Chew (1986), and Chan (1974), all stress the development of attention span, story concept, vocabulary, and considerable background experiences.

Being read to is not enough for Carl Smith (1988). Like Durkin before him, Smith found other home factors which influence a child's reading, He studied the impact of parents as a visual model for their children. Children imitate their parents much like athletes use video movies to improve their game. Moreover, the frequency of parents reading "was more influential than was reading aloud to children'" (Smith, 1988,). Today's parents are a major concern of Charles Chew (1986). Many of today's parents deal with problems that severely effect the life of their children - teenage pregnancies, single parent families, and growing poverty. All of these problems shift the responsibility of reading to children to the day care centers and preschool programs. "In my mind, this adult has the professional and moral responsibility to guarantee that children participate in this [reading aloud] experience,

one it will only be the first step toward literacy" (Chew, 1986, p.8).

In a lecture at the NJRA convention (April, 1989), Jim Trelease discussed why he read to his children. It was he said, the way to "pass the torch from one generation to the next." Since he had been read to as a child, Trelease felt it was important to read aloud to his children. This tradition is also expressed by Bernice Cullinan. Reading aloud "is a family legacy to be passed on to the next generation. Family story book reading could break the cycle of the crippling inheritance of illiteracy that plagues many families" (Taylor and Strickland, 1986, forward). Like Chew, Cullinan sees reading aloud being done by others. "Siblings, day-care workers, care givers, or surrogate parents who read could instill in children some of the fundamental love of the story that grows from hearing them. This would have a lasting effect on each generation that follows" (ibid, forward). Where a torch does not exist to be passed on, a new torch must be lit and start a new generation of readers on their way.

Dorothy Strickland and Lesley Morrow (1988) also see parents as role models being involved in the literacy activities of reading and writing. The child under fifteen months of age needs this type of model to create their own literacy play which allows them to explore the language which is the essence of their emerging literacy.

The available research on reading aloud to children focuses on the period from birth to kindergarten. Little has been done to research the long term effects of reading aloud on the child's disposition to reading. Cullinan, Butler, and Trelease all advocate reading to older children more out of experience than from formal research. Obviously reading aloud to children gives them a head start in school, which as Dolores Durkin (1966) reported is invaluable in the case of children with lower IQ's. The question of long term attitudes towards reading still needs to

be answered. If this is to become a literate reading nation not an illiterate one, then researchers must not only answer the questions concerning what creates literate adults with positive reading dispositions, they must also assure that the results get into the hands of those who effect the developing dispositions to reading.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

Letter Sent With Questionnaire

Dear Parents;

I am a resident of Basking Ridge working on a research project at Kean College and I need your help. I am studying the reading habits of children and their parents in an attempt to better understand the reading process. The questionnaire on the back of this letter is an important part of the study.

The questionnaire should take only a few minutes of your time. Please answer the questions as honestly and directly as you can. If you cannot remember specific ages, you may give approximate ages or leave it blank. Include all of your children, adding additional paper if needed. When answers require the identification of specific children, use "A", 'B', etc. to keep each child's information straight. Feel free to add additional comments on your family's reading experiences.

I do not need your names, if however, you would be interested in possibly answering more detailed questions later in the study, please put your name and address on this side of the questionnaire. All information is confidential and no names will be used in the study.

Please try to return the questionnaire by July 10th in the attached envelope. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Susan L. Watt

Questionnaire

Education of Parents: Mother _____ Father _____

Do both parents live at home? _____

Do both parents work? Full Time _____ Part Time _____

Ages of children: A. _____ Sex: _____ Grade: _____

B. _____ _____ _____

Who reads to your children? _____ How often? _____ When? ____

At what age did you start reading to your child/children? _____

What types of things did you read? _____

At what age did your child/children begin to show a preference in reading materials? _____ Begin choosing books to be read aloud? _____

At what age did your child/children begin to talk? _____

Begin using complete sentences? _____

At what age did your child/children begin to show an interest in books? _

Looking at? _____ Recognizing words? _____

Memorizing or retelling the story? _____

Did your child/children listen to read along tapes with books? _____

At what age did your child/children start reading independently? _____

Did your child/children have any problems learning to read? _____

Did your child/children show an interest in writing before reading? ____

Describe briefly your child's/children's present reading habits and attitudes towards reading and school? _____

_____

_____

Do you read regularly? Mother_____ Father_____ What do you read?____

_____ Can your child see you reading? _____

Were you read to regularly as a young child? Mother _____ Father _____